

# *Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Inc.*

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016**

*Our gratitude to the migrant and refugee women and children for sharing with us their pain, dreams and hopes for a future without violence in their lives. We acknowledge their courage, resilience and the many ways they resist the violence inflicted upon them. We also acknowledge the courage it takes to break away from the violence and the risks and uncertainty involved in this process. We commit to continue advocating for the rights of migrant and refugee women affected by domestic and/or sexual violence in Queensland and for making the perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions and choices.*

*The Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Management Committee, members and staff acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where IWSS stands and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge their role in our community.*

# Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Inc. – Operating as Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS)

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## *ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016*

### **Vision**

In Queensland, women from non-English speaking backgrounds and their children are safe, independent and hopeful for their future.

### **Mission**

IWSS provides timely and high quality services to women from non-English speaking backgrounds and their children who experience domestic and/or sexual violence.

### **Values**

- Violence against women is a human rights violation
- Client- centred
- Ethical practice
- Feminist ethos
- Equality
- Collaboration

### **Our history**

Established in 1986, funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program for a domestic violence service, IWSS operated under the auspice of Chisholm Women's Shelter until becoming incorporated in 1993.

In 1995, funded by Queensland Health, IWSS commenced the provision of a Sexual Assault service. From its inception, IWSS has maintained a strong commitment to promoting the rights of women and children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds affected by domestic and sexual violence.

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## Overview

### About us

The Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Inc. (MWESS Inc.) has been operating independently since 1993 after obtaining legal status as a not-for-profit organisation. Prior to that, around 1982, staff from Windana and Chisholm supported by other women refuges were successful in obtaining funding under the Grant-In-Aid Scheme, Department of Immigration, to employ a worker to establish links with non-English speaking communities in Brisbane to provide support to women and children experiencing domestic violence; and to assist women's refuges through the provision of a culturally appropriate service response. The worker was employed by Windana for the duration of the grant.

In 1986, Chisholm women's shelter was successful in obtaining funding under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, currently known as Homelessness Program, administered through a Commonwealth/State arrangement, to establish a new service, the Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service. The new service was originally based in West End, at the premises of the Women's Community Aid Association and was staffed by bilingual workers to provide services to women from non-English speaking backgrounds and their children seeking support due to domestic violence. The service also took on the role of developing much needed culturally appropriate information and resources for the community and service providers. Nearly ten years later, MWESS was funded by Queensland Health to provide a sexual assault service for women from non-English speaking backgrounds.

MWESS Inc., best known for its operating name, Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS) has continued to grow and maintains its role as a specialist domestic violence and sexual assault service within the wider human service system in Queensland. IWSS provides essential support to women and their children, undertakes community education activities to raise awareness on the impact of domestic and sexual violence, and advocates for the issues and challenges faced by women in seeking justice and support.

We are funded by the Department of Housing and Public Works for the Domestic Violence Service; by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability

Services for the Sexual Assault Service; by the Department of Social Services for the Emergency Relief Service and most recently by the Department of Education and Training for a project to develop resources to support children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds affected by domestic and family violence.

We are also very pleased to have partnered with BRISCC, Zig Zag and Murrigunyah to deliver an innovative sexual assault service at Inala and surrounding suburbs. This service is funded by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. The Brisbane South West Support – Sexual Violence Prevention service was established in April 2016 with great progress being made in delivering culturally appropriate services taking into account the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This service also aims at working alongside the local community in the prevention of sexual violence.

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### **Abbey Richards - Chairperson**

Abbey is the Queensland Community Impact Coordinator for United Way Australia, a social purpose organisation which works to unite communities, business, philanthropy, government and community organisations in collective action around local issues. Prior to her involvement in the community development sector, Abbey was an Employment and Discrimination Lawyer at Caxton Legal Centre and has also worked as a commercial litigator at Holding Redlich Lawyers (where she was also the firm's Pro Bono Coordinator and the Coordinator of the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic).

Abbey was recently named the 2015 Queensland Emergent Woman Lawyer of the Year. Further, she has previously held a position on the management committee of QPILCH, a position on the Queensland Law Society's Industrial Law Committee, has been featured in publications for her pro bono legal work, and received the UQ Vice-Chancellor's Equity and Diversity Award as one of the founding members of the UQ Asylum and Refugee Law Project in 2011.

Abbey has been the Chairperson of IWSS for 2 years and has a strong personal commitment to social justice issues, innovative service delivery practices and cross-sector collaboration."

### **Annie Webster - Vice-Chairperson**

Annie commenced work in the domestic violence sector in 2004 after completing postgraduate study in health promotion.

Working at the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research as education officer, Annie was responsible for a range of projects including organization of the annual Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum, editing the quarterly CDFVRe@der, organizing of educational seminars for the domestic violence sector in QLD and the production of a numerous range of fact sheets for distribution throughout the state. Annie's contribution to the writing and roll out of

*Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence* has led to the attainment of a formal qualification and enhanced confidence for workers within the sector

Annie is committed to supporting IWSS staff to continue to deliver the best service possible to women affected by domestic and family violence.

### **Zoe Rathus - Secretary**

Zoe has worked with survivors of domestic violence since 1981 when she started working as articled clerk in Brisbane. She has a law degree from the University of Queensland and now works as senior lecturer and Director of the Clinical Legal Education Program at Griffith University Law School. She teaches family law and ethics and professional responsibility as well as some of the clinical courses. Zoe's research focuses on the family law system with an emphasis on family violence, women and children. She worked in private practice from 1981 until becoming coordinator of the Women's Legal Service in 1989 until 2004, engaging in extensive law reform activities for women. She has served on a number of Boards and committees and worked in South Africa on gender issues in the mid-1990s. Zoe has received a number of accolades for her work including Australian Young Lawyer of the Year in 1990 and Queensland Woman Lawyer of the Year in 2001. Zoe was awarded an Order of Australia in 2011 for her services to women, the law, Indigenous peoples and education.

Zoe has a long standing relationship with the domestic violence sector and has provided legal advice and support to immigrant and refugee women since IWSS was first established.

### **Ayesha Murray - Treasurer**

Ayesha is a business development and marketing professional who after completing a dual degree at the University of Queensland started her career as a civilian with the Department of Defence. During her time with Defence, Ayesha worked across strategic international policy, internal audit and the Department's long-term

strategic management and finance plans. Relocating to London in 2005, Ayesha moved into the world of media and began her career in media sales. Since then Ayesha has worked for the Financial Times, Nine Network, Multi Channel Network, WIN NBN and WIN Television Sales. Her media sales career has allowed Ayesha to indulge in her passion for sports and the arts; and has also allowed her to travel, filling her passport with as many stamps as possible under the guise of "working"!

Ayesha enjoys giving back to the community, and currently serves on the MWESS Inc. Management Committee and is a Board Member and former President for the Zonta Club of Brisbane Breakfast, an organisation of professionals empowering women through service and advocacy.

### **Robyn Mayes, Member**

Dr Robyn Mayes is a Vice-Chancellor's Senior Research Fellow in the Queensland University of Technology Business School. She is a feminist human geographer with long-standing research interests in gender and equality, labour migration, and the enactment of community. This work is grounded in long-standing empirical work critically examining the Australian mining sector, with contributions on temporary migration, fly-in-fly-out mobilities, corporate social responsibility, women and work, and resource-affected local communities. She has published widely on these themes and has been invited to speak at a range of national and international fora.

### **Chris D'Aquino - Member**

Chris' father is of Portuguese background; was born and raised in Shanghai, China, later migrating to Australia with his family after the communist takeover. Chris' mother is second generation Irish Australian. Also reflective of diversity; Chris' work history spans both the community and public service sectors. She has been working in the field of domestic violence since 1983, firstly in women's shelters and later as a Coordinator of one of the first domestic violence services in Queensland. During this time, Chris also worked as a volunteer with the Women's Legal Service as well as a member of their management committee. In 1993, Chris joined the Office for

Women for a number of years before moving to Legal Aid Queensland where she worked on several projects supporting access to justice, especially for women in rural areas. While at Legal Aid Queensland, Chris also had the privilege of supervising the Spanish and Vietnamese bilingual information services. In 2008 Chris commenced working for the then Department of Child Safety in a managerial position and currently Chris' role is manager of a Child Safety Service Centre. Additionally, during her time with the Department, Chris she also managed a Youth Justice Service.

Chris has a strong personal commitment to social justice issues especially in the area of justice and domestic violence.

## STAFF

The Immigrant Women's Support Service has a core staff of 7 positions including: Senior Caseworker, Caseworkers, Information and Administration Worker and Director. The team is supported by casual staff engaged on a need basis.

Ambyr, Caroline, Sally and Hrisoula provided casework support for the financial year, whilst Maree and Ana led the team through a job-share arrangement for the Senior Caseworker position. Many thanks to Sally for stepping in into the job-sharing arrangement with Ana to continue providing high quality support to the team when Maree left the service. Sally and Ana joined forces and succeeded in supporting the team in maintaining a high level of service delivery as well as meeting all the other requirements of the Senior Caseworker role.

Letitia, Hayley, Maria, Suzie, Daphne, Pia and Sara provided invaluable caseworker support on a casual basis throughout the year. Many thanks to all of you!

Grazia developed organizational policies in line with the Human Services Quality Framework, an enormous task accomplished extremely well.

Ranjika, as usual, provided invaluable support to the team, the Management Committee and the Director and worked hard to meet all organizational expectations whilst providing a warm and welcoming first response to every person making contact with the service.

Of course IWSS would not be the same without our valued students and we are always privileged to be the chosen placement for students from universities across Queensland. Suzie (social work student from CQ University) successfully completed her placement and worked for a short time with us before moving into a longer term project; and we also welcomed Nasanin (social work student from QUT) who commenced her placement with IWSS during the 2015-2016 reporting period.

## OUR FUNDERS

We appreciate the funding received from:

- **Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services** – Sexual Assault Service
- **Department of Housing and Public Works** – Domestic Violence Service  
**Department of Housing and Public Works** – CAP properties for office use
- **Department of Social Services** – Emergency Relief Service
- **Department of Education and Training** – Supporting young children affected by domestic violence (project)



## OUR PARTNERS

We are proud partners with the following agencies:

- Lifeline – Multicultural DV-Alert
- BRISCC, Zig Zag and Murrigunyah – Brisbane Southwest Support – Sexual Violence Prevention service

## OUR DONORS

We are privileged to have received invaluable financial support to enhance our Emergency Relief service from our donors and supporters:

- Australia Solidarity with Latin America
- Australian Securities and Investments Commission
- Brisbane City Council Lord Mayor's Charity Trust
- Lighthouse Care
- Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

- OzHarvest
- Public Safety Business Agency
- Streetsmart
- Zonta Club of Brisbane Breakfast
- Zonta Club of Brisbane South

These and other donations from individuals received throughout the year have made a big difference in the lives of the women and children accessing support from IWSS. Thank you!

## Reports

### **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – ABBEY RICHARDS**

The 2015/2016 financial year was another productive and rewarding year for the Immigrant Women's Support Service.

Increasing political movement in the domestic violence sector was welcomed by IWSS this year, with the Queensland Government releasing a number of reports ('Not Now, Not Ever' and 'The Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-26') and committing to take action to end domestic and family violence. IWSS was involved in the above consultative processes and discussions, among many others this year (detailed on pages 31-32). A big 'thank you' to the IWSS staff, particularly, Ana and Maree, who worked so energetically to ensure that the voices and experiences of the women who access IWSS inform, and are represented in, IWSS policy and law reform initiatives.

We are grateful to the Department of Housing and Public Works for providing funding for another 3 years to 2018 for IWSS' domestic violence response, to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services for funding the sexual assault service and to the Department of Social Services which provides essential funding to assist people in financial distress through the Emergency Relief program. IWSS has also received financial support from several donors and supporters (set out on pages 26-27) for which we are extremely grateful.

The new partnerships IWSS formed this year are particularly noteworthy. IWSS joined with BRISCC, Zig Zag and Murrigunyah in the establishment of a newly funded sexual assault and prevention response at Inala. We have also received funds through the Department of Employment and Education for a project supporting children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds affected by domestic and family violence.

This year saw a marked increase in the rates and extent of violence against women in Queensland, particularly in terms of the complexity of cases and women and children presenting with multiple and complex needs. IWSS staff worked industrially

to keep up with these emerging issues and trends, and I am delighted to report that IWSS continued its practice of ensuring all women who contact the service receive assistance – no phone call goes unanswered! This year, 247 women were provided with case management support for domestic violence and 118 women were supported for sexual assault matters. 247 women were supported through brief interventions with information about options, emotional support, safety planning and referrals, and an additional 429 service providers and 42 family/friends of women experiencing domestic/sexual violence were supported through information and resources. Of those women assisted, almost 1 in 3 were provided with an interpreter and received culturally appropriate support.

IWSS is a unique service; the first and only of its kind in Australia which provides specialist domestic violence and sexual assault service response to women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I am constantly inspired by the courage and resilience of the women who access IWSS, and the staff who work so diligently and passionately.

I have occupied the position of Chairperson of the Management Committee of IWSS for over 2 years now, and it has been a genuine pleasure to work with the Management Committee and IWSS staff in the provision of such a vital service. Unfortunately, this will be my last year as the Chairperson of the IWSS Management Committee. I leave this position with many fond memories, with new friends, and with a real sense of pride about what we have all achieved together. To the Management Committee, it has been an honor to work with such an experienced, thoughtful and collaborative team. To the staff at IWSS – your dedication to the women who access IWSS is truly inspiring. To Cecilia – IWSS' tireless Director – your energy and enthusiasm is a constant source of encouragement. You are an outstanding advocate for women and children and IWSS is fortunate to have you at the helm each day!

## **TREASURER'S REPORT – AYESHA MURRAY**

The Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Inc. operating as the Immigrant Women's Support Service, continued to receive government funding for service delivery.

For the 2015-2016 financial year, the funding for the delivery of core services was provided by:

- Department of Housing and Public Works - for the Domestic Violence Service
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services - for the Sexual Assault Service
- Department of Social Services - for the Emergency Relief Service

We have complied with all financial and performance reporting obligations with respect to all funding bodies and have provided the services according to the specifications agreed upon in the service agreements.

The contract with Lifeline for the Multicultural DV-Alert program has enhanced our capacity to continue co-facilitating this important training across Queensland and we look forward to strengthening this partnership over the new financial year.

Our donors and supporters also made a significant contribution to our Emergency Relief Service through their generous donations during the year. We thank all of those who selected IWSS as the recipient of their donations.

Andrew G. Marshall, from Andrew G. Marshall Chartered Accountants, prepared the audited financial report for the organisation. Once again, the Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Inc. demonstrated sound financial management and I am confident in the organisation's ability to meet its financial obligations in the new financial year.

A full copy of the audited financial report for the organisation will be available at the Annual General Meeting and the report will be submitted to relevant funding bodies and the Australian Charities and Non-profits Commission.

**Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended  
30 June 2016**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	982,182.76	806,147.52
<b>Other Income</b>	--	(6,558.16)
	982,182.76	799,589.36
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<b>Advertising expenses</b>	(130.00)	(230.00)
<b>Auditor's remuneration</b>	(3,210.00)	(3,000.00)
<b>Depreciation and amortization expenses</b>	(3,529.13)	(6,523.99)
<b>Employee benefits expenses</b>	(555,943.11)	(607,197.84)
<b>Other expenses</b>	(259,582.32)	(175,757.62)
	159,788.20	6,879.91
<b>Profit For The Year</b>	159,788.20	6,879.91
<b>Total Comprehensive Income For The Year</b>	159,788.20	6,879.91

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT – CECILIA BARASSI-RUBIO

This year has been marked by significant change, particularly with the release of the report *Not Now, Not Ever – Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*, launched in February 2015. The Queensland government has committed to the implementation of all the recommendations of this important report. In March 2016, the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016-2021* was launched, focusing on four key priority areas: participation and leadership, economic security, safety and health, and well-being. In April 2016, the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026* was released, setting the direction and calling for action to end domestic and family violence in our community.

These important developments have occurred as a result of the alarming rates and extent of violence against women in Queensland and other parts of Australia; and most importantly, in response to the stories of women survivors, who have had the courage to share their experiences of violence and abuse to inform policy and law reform.

The Immigrant Women's Support Service has actively supported and informed the Queensland reforms by voicing the challenges for and strengths of migrant and refugee women who have shared with us their struggles to accomplish a future free from violence.

Our services continue to be provided from an integrated service delivery model, which incorporates a holistic response to both, domestic violence and/or sexual assault presentations, with staff qualified to provide counselling/advocacy, crisis and ongoing case management support. The experiences of the women and their children who have accessed support from the service have influenced the direction of the projects and activities of the Immigrant Women's Support Service for the 2015-2016 financial year.

This financial year, we have also strengthen our collaboration and partnerships by joining BRISCC, Zig Zag and Murrigunyah in the establishment of a newly funded sexual assault and prevention response at Inala. IWSS, in collaboration with our

three partners have embarked in an innovative service delivery response targeting women from diverse groups within Inala and the Southwest region.

We have also received funds through the Department of Employment and Education for a project supporting children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds affected by domestic and family violence. We look forward to the implementation and completion of this project in the new financial year.

Our partnership with Lifeline in the delivery and co-facilitation of the Multicultural DV-Alert has been renewed and we continue to jointly deliver this training in Queensland and we are very excited to have also been allocated the Northern Territory to deliver this important and much needed training program in that community.

I also had the privilege of being invited to join the Interim Multicultural Community Reference Group led originally by the then Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Shannon Fentiman, later replaced by the Hon Grace Grace. The group was formed to advise the Minister on issues affecting Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I joined the Interim Multicultural Community Reference Group together with a group of high profile and community-oriented Queenslanders to discuss and provide feedback on the proposed Multicultural Recognition Bill and other initiatives.

This has been a busy but exciting year for IWSS and the Management Committee and team have embraced every challenge and opportunity presented to us. The IWSS team continues to be relentless in their commitment to providing high quality services to the women and children who seek support from the service.

Professionalism, compassion and strong human rights and feminist informed practice are remarkably present in each team member and reflected in how services are delivered. Many thanks to Ana, Ambyr, Caroline, Maria, Ranjika and Sally and former team members for their ongoing support in building and maintaining a dynamic and healthy workplace. To Hrisoula and Maree, who left the organisation to pursue other interests, we wish them all the best in their new projects and are grateful for their contribution to the service and the team.

My heartfelt thanks to the Management Committee for their determined support to the organisation and the team; and for their understanding and kindness, particularly towards those of us experiencing some personal challenges and losses during the year.

All Committee members, once again, demonstrated their support and commitment to staff well-being; excellence in service delivery; and organizational compliance. Many thanks to: Abbey Richards, our Chairperson for her support, legal expertise and guidance, particularly in relation to contract agreements and industrial matters. Annie Webster, our Vice-Chairperson provided much appreciated knowledge and expertise in the development of organizational policies and submissions for funding. Ayesha Murray, our Treasurer provided support and great leadership in financial management; and supported by Annie Webster and Chris D'Aquino always ensured approvals for financial reporting and other commitments were completed in a timely manner. Zoe Rathus provided invaluable support in her role of Secretary as well as assisting in other processes such as recruitment. Robyn Mayes, provided great support to the activities of the Management Committee despite joining the committee recently. Thanks again to all Committee members for their leadership, dedication and support and for fulfilling their legal obligations during the 2015-2016 financial year.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank our contractors for their support and assistance throughout the year. Many thanks to Katie our Bookkeeper and Camille from Quintessential Administration Services, Rossana from Mum's Help and John Quinones for IT support.

Our colleagues from government and non-government agencies have provided invaluable support in helping us achieving positive outcomes for the women and children in need of a range of essential services and support. As a service system we all experience the challenges of having limited resources and increased demand for services; we are extremely grateful to all the services that have supported us this year.

Finally, our gratitude to the migrant and refugee women and children for sharing with us their pain, dreams and hopes for a future without violence in their lives. We

acknowledge their courage, resilience and the many ways they resist the violence inflicted upon them. We also acknowledge the courage it takes to break away from the violence and the risks and uncertainty involved in this process. We commit to continue advocating for the rights of migrant and refugee women affected by domestic and/or sexual violence in Queensland and for making the perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions and choices.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT – SALLY RICHARDSON, A/ SENIOR CASEWORKER**

For the 2015-2016 financial year, a total of 612 women received assistance from IWSS. Of these, 365 women were assisted by the service through case management support for domestic violence and/or sexual assault, whilst 247 women received support through brief interventions. A total of 162 women required an interpreter.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

A total of 247 women from 67 countries were supported in relation to physical, psychological, social, verbal, property damage, threats and financial abuse. Accredited interpreters were provided to 62 women who required language support.

### **SEXUAL ASSAULT**

A total of 118 women from 40 countries were provided with support in relation to sexual assault, including intimate partner sexual violence, sexual assault from a non-intimate partner, suspected child sexual abuse (of own children), internet related sexual abuse and historical sexual abuse. Of these women, 47 were provided with support through accredited interpreters.

### **ACCOMPANYING CHILDREN**

A total of 534 children accompanied the 365 women who were provided with case management support for domestic violence and or/sexual assault.

### **BRIEF INTERVENTION**

A total of 247 women received brief intervention support, which included information about options, emotional support, safety planning and referrals. Brief intervention refers to support to women who chose not to receive ongoing assistance from the service.

## **SPECIALIST SUPPORT TO SERVICE PROVIDERS**

A total of 429 service providers and 42 family/friends of women experiencing violence in their lives were supported through information and resources.

## **REFERRAL MANAGEMENT COORDINATION SYSTEM (RMCS) QPS REFERRALS**

A total of 101 referrals were received through QPS referrals during the financial year. This put our service in contact with women immediately after police responses to incidents of domestic violence and sexual abuse were recorded. The majority of the women referred via QPS referrals received case management support from IWSS.

## **TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

- IWSS caseworkers continued working with women from Papua New Guinea who reported experiencing past domestic violence and sexual assault in their country of origin along with complex issues such as homelessness, immigration, trauma and limited income.
- Women on temporary partner visa subclass (820) and (309) sought assistance for domestic violence, they presented as having a lack of understanding of the family violence provisions and their legal rights in Australia.
- An emergence of women on tourist visas with children and their partners being unwilling to apply for a spousal visa and as a result women were vulnerable to having limited legal rights and options in Australia.
- Ongoing support and interpreter engagement was required for women with limited English proficiency and lack of family support in Australia.
- Family law issues and immigration issues combined with an experience of domestic violence remained predominant features of presentations.
- Ongoing issue in relation to women named as respondents on cross orders, following previous domestic violence orders in which they were identified as aggrieved.
- Applications for grant of aid being refused from Legal Aid Queensland on the basis that the women had joint accounts or assets regardless whether they had access to the assets or not, thus resulting in barriers to legal representation.
- Women presenting with financial issues where loans had been taken out under their names.

- IWSS continued supporting women with no income due to their visa status restricting their access to Centrelink and work rights or being completely dependent on their abusive partners resulting in increased risk of abuse.
- Asylum seekers who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence constitute an emerging client group for the service. Presenting issues are exacerbated by trauma and the uncertainty of undetermined immigration status.
- New Zealand citizens continued to face ongoing barriers due to lack of income rights and limited access to services such as community and social housing in Australia.
- Women on dependent student visas sought support from IWSS for domestic violence related issues. Women on student visas affected by domestic violence are not able to access income support from Centrelink and have limited access to support services. On separation, spousal support is not provided and the women are left with no income, at times with children and or pregnant. Women in this group are vulnerable to homelessness, and are at risk of further abuse and have limited support options.
- Access to affordable housing continued to be a barrier to meet long-term outcomes for women and their children after experiencing domestic violence.

#### **TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES- SEXUAL ASSAULT**

- The service continued to support international students experiencing sexual assault in shared accommodation. Students report that limited financial resources restricts their capacity to access safe accommodation thus increasing safety risks.
- Continued demand for support for asylum seekers who had experienced sexual assault.
- IWSS caseworkers supported women experiencing intimate partner sexual violence, historical sexual assault, sexual assault from a non-intimate partner and mothers of children reporting suspected child sexual abuse.

## SERVICE DELIVERY SUMMARY

- Almost 1 in 3 women required and were provided with an interpreter. All women were provided with culturally appropriate support.
- Main languages spoken by women accessing support for domestic violence and sexual assault included:
  - Amharic- Arabic- Afrikaans- Akan- Bengali- Cantonese- Dari- Dinka- Dutch-Ewe- Farsi- French- Hindi- Hazaraghi- Hmong-Indonesian- Japanese-Khmer- Kirundi- Korean- Kurdish- Liberian-Mandarin- Malay- Madi- Ormo- Polish- Punjabi- Portuguese- Pijin- Pashto- Russian- Rohingya- Spanish- Somali- Sinhalese- Swahili- Solomon Islands Kinyarwanda- Tamil- Thai- Tagalog- Tongan-Urdu- Vietnamese

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

IWSS provided a total of 43 community education sessions and presentations to a range of community groups and service providers. A total number of 879 participants attended the sessions.

### Community Education

- Griffith University, Logan Campus
- Griffith University, Masters of Counselling Course
- Farsi Speaking Women's Group Harmony Place
- TAFE campuses -Bracken Ridge, Bowen Hills, Grovely, Caboolture, Southbank
- Australian- African Women's Network International Women's Day
- Life Line Multicultural stream DV alert
- STAR Weaving Workshop Mt Gravatt TAFE
- ACCESS Workshop, Settlement Workers
- Multicultural Development Association
- Professional Counselling Association of Australia
- 4EB Radio Interview
- Ethnic Communities Council

## Presentations

- Sexual Assault Conference on Intimate Partner Sexual Violence
- Centrelink Statewide Multicultural Support Officers
- Social Dimensions of Migrant Labour Symposium
- Australian Association of Social Work Students and New Graduates Network
- South East Qld Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families and Domestic Violence Summit
- QPASTT and MDA Community Leaders Dinner- Domestic Violence, role of community leaders
- ACCESS Community Leaders Seminar
- Working with Interpreters webinar QCOSS and IWSS

## EMERGENCY RELIEF SERVICE REPORT

The Emergency Relief Service funded by the Department of Social Services provided a financial allocation for the financial year 2015-2016 to a total of \$21,000.00. This funding assisted 175 individuals, mainly women. Although this figure does not quantify the benefit to the families receiving financial support; we are aware of the positive impact of delivering this type of assistance to families experiencing financial distress due to the impact of violence and abuse. While the great majority of recipients were women within the ages of 20-29 and 40-64 who experienced domestic violence, financial assistance was also provided to men and women not affected by violence but who experienced financial hardship resulting from unexpected expenses due to illness, unemployment and the challenges of living with a limited income.

The financial assistance provided through the Emergency Relief Service included gift vouchers for the purchase of basic food items, transport assistance, assistance with payment of utility and medical bills, assistance with education and training fees, and assistance to pay accommodation costs.

We are very fortunate to have wonderful supporters and donors who through their fundraising efforts have enhanced our financial resources for the emergency relief service. We are indebted to the following donors:

**Ozharvest** for their fresh produce and non-perishable donations that have benefitted numerous families requiring fresh food due to financial distress or lack of access to income support.

**Lighthouse Care** for donations targeting families in financial distress. Donations were received in the form of vouchers for fresh fruit and vegetables and other non-perishable food items.

**Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust** for the foodbank vouchers, which assisted us to replenish the food cupboard to assist families in financial distress.

**Public Safety Portfolio including Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Service, Emergency Management and the Public Safety Business Agency** for their generous donation of \$5,278.00 from a fundraising activity held on

International Women's Day 2016. These funds were used to assist 51 women and their families. Of these women, 23 did not have permanent residency status and another 26 had no access to income support due to their immigration status.

**StreetSmart Community Small Grants** provided us with a grant of \$1,000.00 to assist women and their children escaping domestic violence. Eleven (11) families, including 10 children were assisted with these funds. Of the women assisted, 4 had no access to income support from any source due to their immigration status.

**Maurice Blackburn Lawyers** kindly fundraised for the women accessing the Immigrant Women's Support Service. We received a total of \$9,438 (\$4080.00 cash and \$5,385.00 in gift vouchers), that was directed to meet a range of financial needs of 72 women and 62 children. Out of the 72 women, 40 had non-permanent residency status in Australia and 37 did not have access to income of any sort.

Other donations received were used to supplement the Emergency Relief Service. Many thanks for their donations to the **Australian and Securities Investments Commission** (\$412), **Australia Solidarity with Latin America** (\$440) and individuals donors (\$740).

## Projects and Activities

### Collaboration and Partnerships

#### **LIFELINE MULTICULTURAL DV-ALERT TRAINING**

DV-Alert is a free national domestic violence training funded by the Department of Social Services under the Gender Equality for Women Program. The main aim of DV-Alert is to improve the capacity of health, allied health and community frontline workers to recognise the signs of domestic and family violence, respond appropriately to people affected by this type of violence and refer to appropriate services. The Multicultural DV-Alert training is one of four streams specifically designed to support frontline workers to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

For the 2015-2016 financial year, IWSS co-facilitated workshops in Mackay, Rockhampton, Inala, and Logan. We are currently preparing for the delivery of the Multicultural DV-Alert training in other locations in the new financial year.

We have forged a collaborative and professional relationship with Lifeline staff involved in the management of the DV-Alert program as well as those involved in the planning and delivering of the training. We are grateful for the support and opportunities provided by Lifeline to enable IWSS to continue with this partnership. We appreciate the support provided to IWSS staff to attain the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as well as the engagement opportunities through consultation on the review of DV-Alert generalist and multicultural programs.

#### **BRISBANE SOUTHWEST SUPPORT – SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICE**

BRISCC and Zig Zag led the submission for funding for a specialist sexual assault service at Inala. The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services approved funding for the Brisbane Southwest Support – Sexual Violence Prevention service in the later part of the financial year. The service was up and running towards the end of the 2015-2016 financial year with great progress being made in the establishment phase led by the Inala Management Group (comprised by

the four partner services). This has been a great initiative still in its early stages and we look forward to providing a more detailed report in the new financial year.

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FUNDING FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A RESOURCE FOR WOMEN WHOSE CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

IWSS received funding from the Department of Education and Training to develop a multilingual online resource to assist women to support their children affected by domestic and family violence. A total funding allocation of \$48,616.00 has been received for this project. Hayley, who has an academic interest in children affected by domestic violence, prepared the funding submission with input from other team members. This is another very exciting project for the new financial year.

### **QUEENSLAND ACCESSING INTERPRETERS WORKING GROUP (QAIWG)**

IWSS continues its membership with QAIWG and this year our main focus was to support the development of a policy template to encourage the engagement of credentialed interpreters by non-government organisations. Grazia Catalano and Cecilia met with representatives from the Human Services Quality Framework, Strategic Investment & Quality, and representatives from Multicultural Affairs Queensland and QCOSS to discuss and progress this initiative. We succeeded in our aim, on behalf of QAIWG, to introduce a policy on working with interpreters as part of the Human Services Quality Framework. The policy was developed by Grazia employed by IWSS and this is available as a sample policy for other NGOs in Queensland through Community Door. Ana from IWSS and Dr Kamil Shah from QCOSS, presented a webinar jointly organised by QAIWG and QCOSS introducing the policy guide and template on engaging credentialed interpreters to the broader service sector.

### **TELSTRA SAFE CONNECTIONS PROJECT**

IWSS, through WESNET, has been provided with Telstra donated mobile phones to assist women affected by domestic violence to stay safely connected. The smartphones are distributed with pre-paid credit and information on the safe use of technology. This program has won an Australia Crime and Violence Prevention Award in 2016.

## **THE PATH TO JUSTICE: IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF THE COURTS**

IWSS supported the Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity by organising a consultation with women who had experienced the court system. IWSS also assisted the Council in their consultation with service providers.

## **SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF MIGRANT LABOUR SYMPOSIUM**

Dr Robyn Mayes, Vice-chancellor's Research Fellow, School of Management, QUT Business School, Queensland University of Technology invited us to participate in the symposium. IWSS presented a paper and participated in a discussion around future involvement with the group with a view to use the skills and resources of researchers from Queensland and interstate to research into migration labour, an issue that affects many women accessing support services from IWSS.

## **ARCHIVING THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S SUPPORT WEBSITE**

The IWSS' website has been chosen to be archived as part of the Queensland's documentary heritage through PANDORA (a national archive). IWSS was selected for inclusion through the granting of a license under the *Copyright Act 1968* to copy our publications into the Archive and provide public online access to it via the internet. This grants permission to the library to retain the publication of the IWSS' website in the Archive to provide public access in perpetuity.

## **END OF YEAR CELEBRATION**

We hosted the End of Year Celebration at Ahmet's Restaurant, Southbank. The activity was attended by a total of 28 women and 39 children. We had a magician and a face painter to entertain the children. The women and children had a great time and were very happy with the gifts kindly donated by Brisbane City Council and Zonta Club of Brisbane Breakfast. Many thanks to Ayesha Murray, who once again, organised and delivered the gifts from Zonta and our heartfelt thanks to the Brisbane City Council Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust for providing the funding to host the activity.

## Law Reform and Consultations

- *Submission to the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015*
- *Submission to the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015*
- *Submission to the Queensland Government Discussion Paper on Circumstance of Aggravation and Strangulation in collaboration with Zoe Ratus, AM, Griffith University Law School and member of the Management Committee*
- *Submission to the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence on the draft Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2015-2025*
- *Submission and attendance to Hearing in relation to the Queensland Government Discussion Paper on Domestic Violence Bill (Ouster Conditions and Cross applications)*
- *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016-2021 (targeted consultation)*
- *CALD roundtable to inform the development of the third Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (Adelaide)*
- *National roundtable on reducing violence against CALD women and their children (Sydney)*
- *Minister Shannon Fentiman's Roundtable to examine the issues raised in the Not Now, Not Ever Report specific to the CALD community (Beenleigh)*
- *Australian Press Council Roundtable on Family Violence Reporting (consultation)*
- *Islamic Women's Association (consultation)*
- *Women's Legal Service consultation on development of financial tips for women escaping domestic violence*
- *National Standards for Online and Telephone Counselling (two workshops)*
- *Draft Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy (consultation)*
- *National Domestic and Family Violence Bench book (consultation)*

- *Queensland Law Society Best Practice Guidelines (consultation)*
- *Queensland New Housing Strategy- Deep Dive session*
- *ANROWS National Research project on domestic and family violence data for diverse groups (targeted consultation)*
- *Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research - Cross Border Protection Orders (consultation)*
- *Online DV application forms – Co-design workshops*

Big thanks to Ana and Maree for their work and support in putting together submissions for law reform within very short timeframes and for joining me and/or supporting the team whilst I was attending a range of important consultations and roundtables. The IWSS team has provided invaluable data to inform our involvement in and contribution to law reform.

## Service System

IWSS continued its membership with important service system networks:

- **Queensland Sexual Assault Network (QSAN)**
- **Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (QDVSN)**
- **Ending Violence Against Women in Queensland (EVAWQ)**
- **Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group (QAISWG)**
- **Emergency relief service providers**
- **Combined Women’s Refuge Group (CWRG)**
- **Victim Services Interagency Organisation Network (VISION)**

### **REFERRAL MANAGEMENT COORDINATION SYSTEM (RCMCS) MANAGED BY THE REDBOURNE GROUP**

The Queensland Police Service referral system was previously managed by SupportLink and currently is managed by the Redbourne Group since December 2015. IWSS signed a partner agreement with RCMS and continue to receive and provide support to QPS referrals.

### **PATHWAYS**

IWSS has the following clients’ pathways to facilitate access to women and their children to specialist legal advice and representation.

- **Legal Aid Queensland** – for domestic violence and family law advice and representation
- **Refugee and Immigration Legal Service** – for immigration law advice and representation

### **PROTOCOLS**

IWSS is currently reviewing protocols with:

- Women’s Legal Service
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service

## **FAMILY LAW PATHWAYS NETWORK**

A national program funded by the Australian Attorney-General department. The network is a resource for professionals and practitioners working with people who have separated or are in the process of separation. The purpose of the network is to develop appropriate referral mechanisms to assist families to navigate the family law system. IWSS presented on CALD women's issues at the initial meeting in June 2016.

## STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At IWSS we have developed a culture of learning whereby staff are supported to take on opportunities to develop professionally. This year, the following activities were attended by team members.

- Mobile Phone Safety
- Self- care
- Access to Justice for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women
- The Criminal Justice Response to Intimate Partner Violence: Limitations and Possibilities
- 1800Respect Effects of Domestic and Family violence on children
- Police interviews with language interpreters
- Combined Women’s Refuge Group workshop with the Department of Housing and Public Works
- Department Social Services Data Exchange (DEX) training
- Women’s Legal Service Referral Pathway
- Forced Marriage: Understanding context and connecting to services
- Training and Consultation on Slavery and Human Trafficking (Freedom partnership to end slavery)
- Qld Government interagency Guidelines for responding to people who have experienced Sexual Assault
- Responding to Women and Children Experiencing DFV: Evaluating Practice Symposium
- Sexual Assault Conference
- ESL & Adult Lit Information EXPO
- Queensland Homelessness Information Platform Training
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service training
- Legal Aid Qld referral pathways system
- Lifeline Certificate IV in training and assessment
- Specialist Homelessness Information Platform training
- Griffith University Domestic Violence Forum
- Royal Commission Multicultural Forum
- Inaugural Queensland Women’s Week
- Domestic Violence Summit Griffith University Logan

- Department of Immigration and Border Protection Information session
- A conversation with Dr Benjamin MacQueen MDA
- Women's Legal Service - Financial Abuse
- Women's Legal Service - Counselling Practice Standard
- Engaging with domestic violence perpetrators
- Suicide prevention training
- To Screen or Not to Screen
- Separation and Property Michael Lynch Family Lawyers
- Child and Family Network Workshop
- Seminar on domestic violence Queensland University of Technology
- Connecting your clients with Legal Aid
- Recognizing and responding to Intimate Partner Sexual Violence
- Family Law Pathways
- Temporary Protection Visa SHEV Information Sharing Forum
- Queensland Council of Social Services Happy with HSQF
- Migrants Cultural Well-being Day
- Pathways Australia

## Important Information

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Immigrant Women's Support Service welcomes any donations to assist us in supporting women and children who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence. Many of the families we support have no access to income support and we rely on donations to enhance our Emergency Relief Service.

The account details for donations are

<b>Account Name</b>	<b>Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service Inc.</b>
<b>BSB</b>	<b>034 013</b>
<b>Account</b>	<b>620191</b>
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Donation</b>

Donations are tax deductible. Please contact us [mail@iwss.org.au](mailto:mail@iwss.org.au) if you require a receipt for your donation.

